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Garden of the Forking Paths

by

Alma Louise Visscher

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Drawing and Intermedia

Department of Art and Design

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Fall 2011

Edmonton, Alberta

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Education & Qualifications:

2009 – 2011	Master of Fine Arts – Drawing and Intermedia University of Alberta, Edmonton AB
2004 – 2008	Bachelor of Arts with Great Distinction – Visual Arts, English Trinity Western University, Langley BC

Scholarships and Awards:

2011	Government of Alberta Graduate Student Academic Scholarship
2009	Graduate Assistant Research Scholarship, University of Alberta
2004 – 2008	Trinity Western University Academic Scholarship

Exhibitions:

2011	*Garden of the Forking Paths,* The FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB
2011	*Innovation: Technics of a Mind Body Performance* The Little Gallery, University of Calgary AB
2009	*Some Adventures* The Mansion Gallery, Langley BC
2009	*We Were Dreaming* The Mansion Gallery, Langley BC
2008	*Shifting Boundaries: A Graphite Experience* The CityScape Gallery, North Vancouver, BC
2008	*5@Fraserview: New Work By TWU Students* The View Gallery, Richmond BC
2008	*UNDERGROUND: The Senior Art Show* Trinity Western University, Langley BC
2007	*Intermedial* Trinity Western University, Langley BC
2007	*Silent Art Auction: Horse Shoes and Hand Grenades* Firehall Arts Centre, Vancouver BC

Professional Experience:

2011	*University of Alberta* Principal Instructor for Art 240 *Introduction to Drawing* (Spring Semester)
2010	*University of Alberta*

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Education & Qualifications

2009 – 2011 Master of Fine Arts - Directing and Dramaturgy
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

2000 – 2006 Bachelor of Arts with Great Distinction – Theatre Arts, Journals
Trinity Western University, Langley, BC

Awards, Bursaries and Scholarships

2011 Government of Alberta Graduate Student Scholarship

2009 Graduate Research Assistantship Scholarship, University of Alberta

2001 – 2006 Trinity Western University Academic Scholarship

Publications

2011 Guide to the Fringe, Blog, The Fringe Calling, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

2011 Interview, Article and Blog, Playwrights' Blog, The Lunch Ladies, University of Calgary, AB.

2010 Star Interview, The Manitoba Calling, Langley, BC

2010 Hit Play Interview, The Manitoba Calling, Langley, BC

2006 Opening Production Co-Writer, Co-Director, The Cornerstone Theatre, Vancouver, BC.

2006 Opening Production Co-Writer, Co-Director, The Theatre Technique, Richmond, BC.

2005 Co-Director, Assistant Director, Theatre Technique, Richmond, BC.

2004 Intermediate Theatre Director, Langley, BC

2004 Director, Actor, Theatre Technique, Richmond, BC.

Professional Experience

2011 Directing of Albion.

Directing Instructor for Art 240 Production at Augustana Campus, Camrose, AB.

2010 Directing of Albion.

Principal Instructor for Art 240 *Introduction to Drawing* (Fall Semester)

2010 — *University of Alberta*
Lab Assistant for Drawing Department (Spring Semester)

2010 — *University of Alberta*
Teaching Assistant for ART 340 *Drawing the Human Figure* (Winter Semester)

2009 — *University of Alberta*
Teaching Assistant for ART 339 *Introduction to Drawing* (Fall Semester)

2009 — *Credo Christian High School*
Substitute Art Teacher *Art 10/11*

2008 — *Trinity Western University*
Substitute Art Instructor ART 400 *Senior Studio*

2007 – 2008 — *Trinity Western University Art Departments*
Department Studio Assistant

Community Service:

2011 — *University of Alberta Guest Speaker*
Painting 500
Printmaking 500
Drawing 440

2011 — *Innovation: Technics of a Mind Body Performance*
Curator

2011 — *University of Alberta*
"School U" Volunteer Art Workshop Leader

2009 -2010 — *Boys and Girls Club of Canada, Langley*
Art Activity Leader

2009 — *The Mansion Gallery Collective*
Gallery Coordinator

2007 – 2008 — *Underground: The Senior Art Show*
Event Coordinator

2007 – 2008 — *[Spaces] Trinity Western University Literary Journal*
Visual Editor

2006 -2008 — *Trinity Western University Art Society*
Secretary

2005 – 2006 — *Surrey Art Gallery*
Art Program Assistant

Alma Louise Visscher
DVD Image List

File Name: Visscher.01
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart*
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension cord
Dimension: Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'

File Name: Visscher.02
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart*
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension cord
Dimensions: Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'

File Name: Visscher.03
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart*
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension cord
Dimensions: Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'

File Name: Visscher.04
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart* (Detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension cord
Dimensions: Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'

File Name: Visscher.05
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart* (Detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension cord
Dimensions: Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'

File Name: Visscher.06
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart*
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension cord
Dimensions: Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'

File Name: Visscher.07
Title: *When will you stop breaking my heart* (Detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Plastic Doll, wood frame, fabric, tulle, lace. branch, light bulbs, extension

	cord
Dimensions:	Tent: 4' by 3.5' by 6' Doll: 12" Wand: 4'
File Name:	Visscher.08
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Fabric, lace, polyester filling, cotton batting, plastic, rope.
Dimensions:	Dimensions variable (approximately 6' by 12')
File Name:	Visscher.09
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Fabric, lace, polyester filling, cotton batting, plastic, rope.
Dimensions:	Dimensions variable (approximately 6' by 12')
File Name:	Visscher.10
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Fabric, lace, polyester filling, cotton batting, plastic, rope.
Dimensions:	Dimensions variable (approximately 6' by 12')
File Name:	Visscher.11
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Fabric, lace, polyester filling, cotton batting, plastic, rope.
Dimensions:	Dimensions variable (approximately 6' by 12')
File Name:	Visscher.12
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail)
Date:	2011
Materials:	Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions:	Variable
File Name:	Visscher.13
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *Seeing is Believing*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions:	12" by 12"
File Name:	Visscher.14
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *Dream Space*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions:	10" by 10"
File Name:	Visscher.15
Title:	*The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *Secrets*
Date:	2011
Materials:	Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel

Dimensions: 5" by 5"

File Name: Visscher.16
Title: *The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *The Garden*
Date: 2011
Materials: Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions: 12" by 25"

File Name: Visscher.17
Title: *The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *Of many days*
Date: 2011
Materials: Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions: 12" by 12"

File Name: Visscher.18
Title: *The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *Entrails of time*
Date: 2011
Materials: Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions: 15" by 15"

File Name: Visscher.19
Title: *The Cloud Reliquary* (Detail) – *Transfigured*
Date: 2011
Materials: Paper, graphite, acrylic paint, liquid latex on panel
Dimensions: 12" by 12"

File Name: Visscher.20
Title: *Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric
Dimensions: Each: 18" by 15" by 30"

File Name: Visscher.21
Title: *Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again* (Detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric
Dimensions: Each: 18" by 15" by 30"

File Name: Visscher.22
Title: *Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again* (Detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric
Dimensions: Each: 18" by 15" by 30"

File Name: Visscher.23
Title: *Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again* (Detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric
Dimensions: Each: 18" by 15" by 30"

File Name: Visscher.24
Title: *Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric
Dimensions: Each: 18" by 15" by 30"

File Name: Visscher.25
Title: *Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric
Dimensions: Each: 18" by 15" by 30"

File Name: Visscher.26
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.27
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.28
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.29
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.30
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.31
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.32
Title: *Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes* (detail)
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, rope, polyester filling
Dimensions: approximately 3' by 5' 6' with addition of 2' by 3'

File Name: Visscher.33
Title: Installation shot *Garden of the Forking Paths*
Date: 2011
Materials: Video projections, fabric, wood, plastic, wire.
Dimensions: Variable

File Name: Visscher.34
Title: *Cloud dress / My soul*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, wire, plastic
Dimensions: Approximately (5' by 3' by 2' by 28')

File Name: Visscher.35
Title: *Cloud dress / My soul*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, wire, plastic
Dimensions: Approximately (5' by 3' by 2' by 28')

File Name: Visscher.36
Title: *Cloud dress / My soul*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, wire, plastic
Dimensions: Approximately 5' by 3' by 2' by 28'

File Name: Visscher.37
Title: *Cloud dress / My soul*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, wire, plastic
Dimensions: Approximately (5' by 3' by 2' by 28')

File Name: Visscher.38
Title: *Now and then, you will*
Date: 2011
Materials: Fabric, wire, plastic
Dimensions: Approximately 1' by 5'

File Name: Visscher.39
Title: Installation shot *Garden of the Forking Paths*
Date: 2011
Materials: Video projections, fabric, wood, plastic, wire
Dimensions: Variable

Alma Louise Visscher
DVD Video List

File Name: Visscher_Alma
Title: *Clouds*
Date: 2011
Materials: Video projection

File Name: Visscher_Alma
Title: *The Walk*
Date: 2011
Materials: Video projection

"The Garden of the Forking Paths"[1]

Alma Louise Visscher

The romanticized ideal of the intrepid traveller. The loneliness of the exilic existence. The expulsion from the garden. Those cursed to wander the earth. The terror of immateriality is flung into the comfort of the material. Yet within these extremes of place exist the subtleties and the complexities of being 'neither here nor there.' It is in this relationship between transience and the body that I found the impetus for my current body of work. The unstable nature of dwelling is closely intertwined with the sacred; tents, clouds, and dresses are some images and objects that I am using to embody the interplay between a solid space and a passing moment. As an image of shelter and movement the tent references a nomadic existence, a mode of dwelling that is not necessarily connected to a particular place. This state of being liminal is characterized by a sense of temporal dwelling and removal from the external environment. As such, the tents are ensconced, the sojourner is constantly turning away from sight, time is mutable – a dream like stasis. The absence of a solid space, both physically and spiritually, can be de-stabilizing yet simultaneously transformative. It is through this process of transformation that I explore issues surrounding transience, ritual, and surface.

First: When will you stop breaking my heart

This installation evolved into a meditation on agency. It addresses the interiority of space through the creation of a psychological distance between the viewer and the objects installed. The tent is suspended and closed off. It emits a ghostly light while still permitting awareness of the interior of the tent. It veils the space between the interior and the exterior, between the objects and a sensory experience. Consequently, the viewer is both a participant and an observer. This role of the observer is echoed by the plastic doll on the wall, an object that connects to cultural knowledge and yet shows the slippages within iconographic meanings. The staff, or wand, the only object in the room which touches the ground, acts as a ritual object while yet still alluding to its physical task of supporting the body. Combining the seriousness that draws the religious impulse (the fear of immateriality, death, and absence) with references to childhood play, realness and imagination, *When will you stop breaking my heart*, is a question of possibilities.

Second: The Cloud Reliquary

I present clouds, in their mutability, as an image of transformation. In my iterations of them they are simultaneously solid, immaterial, and transient; they act as a container and are body-like as opposed to being ephemeral. Like relics they are preserved remnants that allow for a multiplicity of meanings. They are constructed predominantly out of synthetic materials such as polyester filling, machine-made lace, sheets of acetate, thin sheets of plastic, rope, and a miscellaneous assortment of fabrics. These materials are combined together, sewn, meshed, and strung into cloud-like semblances that are both fleshy and otherworldly. The bulbous forms both obscure and transform, shifting from one place to another. As such, they become icons of both the superfluous and the sacred, echoing and furthering the question raised by the tents. As George Santayana, the Spanish-American philosopher-poet, suggests, " [t]he heavens are the most constant things we know, the skies the most inconstant . . . it is a prejudice to suppose that instability must be sad or must be trivial" (*Cloud Castles*). Grasping for the surface in the instant, the tents and the clouds

1 The title for this show references a short story by Jorge Luis Borges: "The Garden of the Forking Path." In this story Borges explores notions of the infinite possibilities that lie within alternative futures.

become spaces for the absent body to co-exist with intangible sensations. The drawings examine and correspond to the intimate spaces of the fabric shelters and the shadows of the clouds: evidencing what is internal, reflecting a moment or a process, and indicating an invisible act. As such they are positioned in dialogue with *The Cloud Reliquary*. They allude to the experience of pain and the disintegration between the covering and the revealing.

Third: Leaving, Returning, Finding, Gone Again
Fourth: Wish image one: what happens when we close our eyes

These pieces are made using fabrics that destabilize typical expectations surrounding the function and use of tents while simultaneously enacting their transitory nature. From their openings, frothy appendages made of lace, permeable fabrics, and tulle emerge. Through this, the tents become a space within a space, responding and reacting to the structures that surround them: transforming, escaping, and transfiguring. The tents become spaces suspended and constrained through time and memories. As with the clouds, these symbols of transience are constructed using plastic and other synthetic materials whose lives are much longer than ours. These slippages of time are addressed further in the dress installation and the headdress.

Fifth: Now and then, you will
Sixth: Cloud Dress

With these objects the line between garment as vestment, protective barrier, and prosthetic is blurred. The pretence to the feminine and other codified aesthetics masks the questions of what is covered, wherein lies the entity, and why the extension or suspension of self; consequently the dress and the headdress become visible phantasms of the invisible.

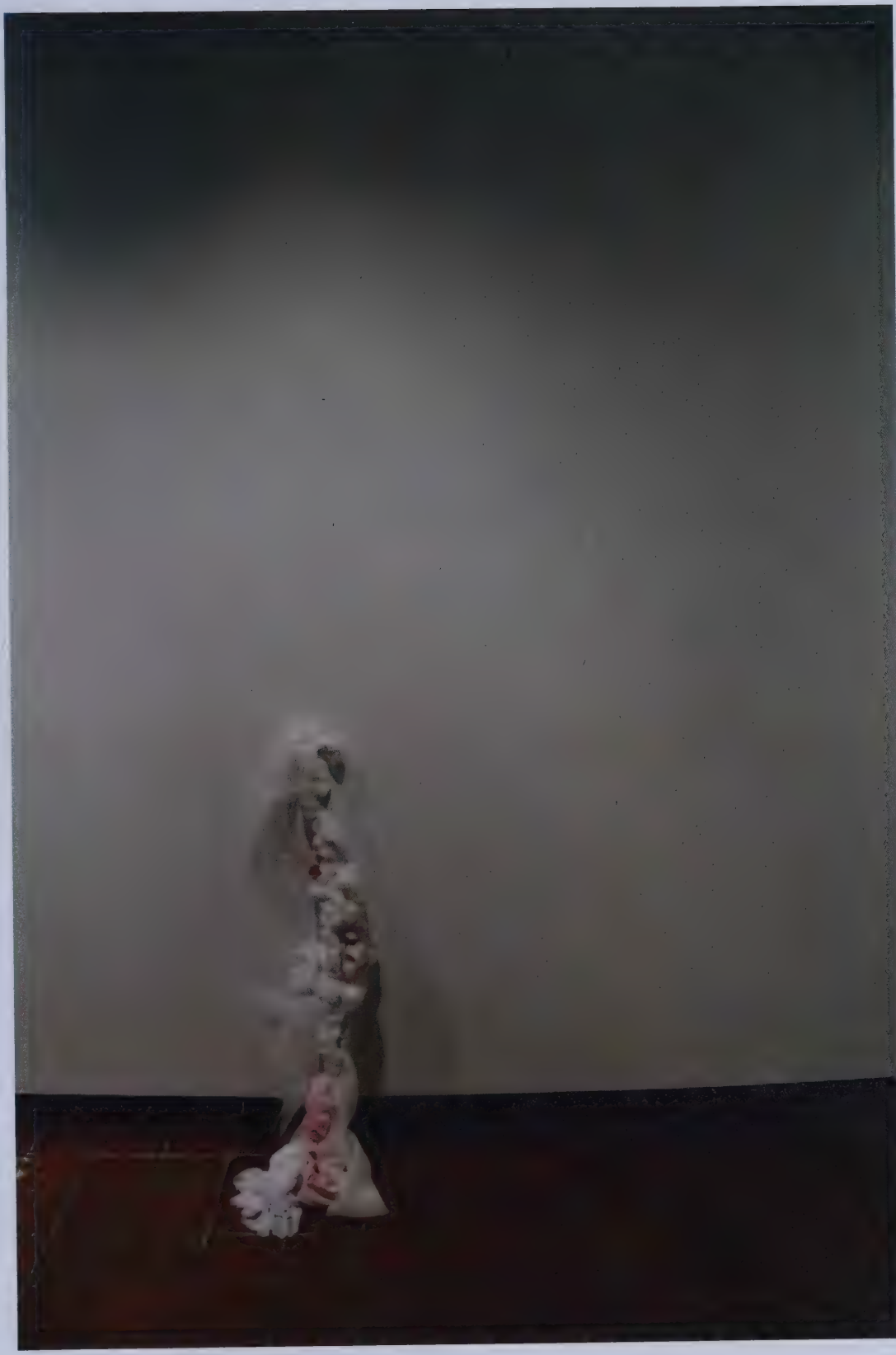
Seventh: The Walk

In this performance based video I undertook a journey around an small island located off the coast of British Columbia. Wearing a large skirt (loosely based off a bustle pattern from the late 1800s) that had small clouds-like appendages, undulations of fabric, and a train made out of plastic attached to it, I both merged and jarred with the environment as I made my processional walk through contrastingly idyllic and barren environments. By covering myself with the dress I brought the issues I was exploring in the tents to interact more intimately with the body and the self. Crawling along the rocky beach, meandering through the forest, the figure revisions the wandering prodigal, a foreign creature attempting to fit within nature, returning and continually leaving again.

Works Cited

Borges, Jorge Luis "The Garden of the Forking Paths." *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*. Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby: New York: New Directions P, 1962. 19-29.

Santayana, George "Cloud Castles." *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*. London: Scribner, 1924. 19 -24.

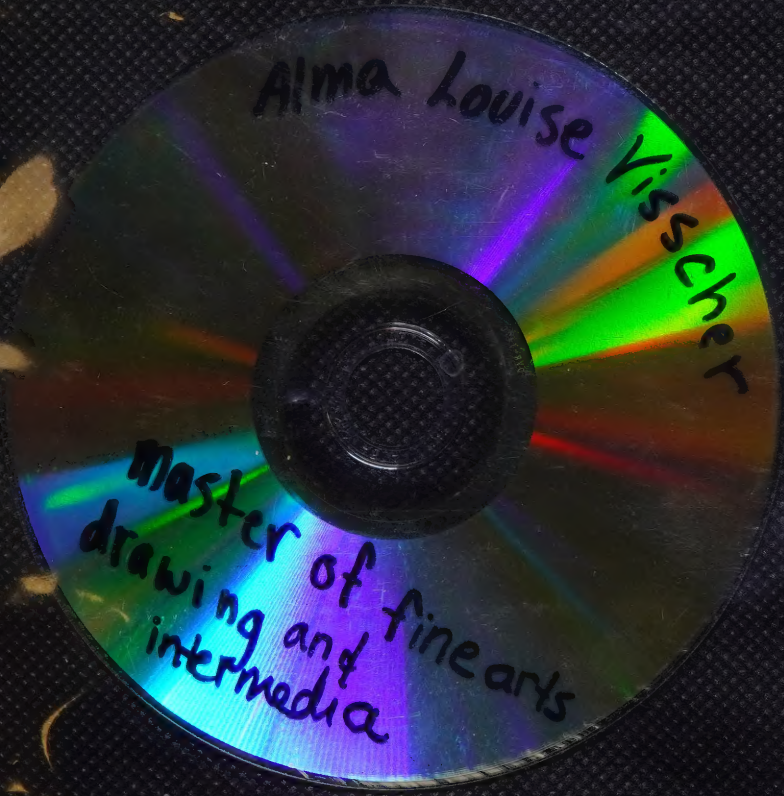


"Clouds" 2011

Miss Anger, Alma

"The Walk" 2011

Missing, Alma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Master of fine arts
drawing and
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